

12 OCT 2001

Lima-Aerobatics

HARD TRAINING PAYS OFF FOR MALAYSIAN TOP GUNS

LANGKAWI, Oct 12 (Bernama) -- They are combat pilots. One team is given a 10-day notice and another team, a month's notice. Their mission is to put up an aerobatic show.

They are from the 18th Squadron of the Royal Malaysian Air Force (RMAF) based in Butterworth, which flies F/A 18D Hornet fighter jets, and the 19th Squadron based in Kuantan with MiG-29N fighter jets.

"This is the first time we have to put up an aerobatic show. We performed aerial display only in the previous Lima," the MiG team leader, Lt Kol Kamalruzaman Mohamed Othman told Bernama at the Langkawi International Maritime and Aerospace Exhibition (Lima '01), here.

He said that actually there was not much difference between performing an aerobatic show and doing their routine work.

"The only difference is that it involves a lot of risk as there are many levels and aircraft at the same time," he said.

"We used to fly the Russian-made MiG far from each other but here we have to fly with just three metres for wing clearance at one stage.

Even during the merger manoeuvres, where two aircraft come from different directions, they are just 10m away from each other at the meeting point," he said.

Lt Kol Kamalruzaman said the team practised for about an hour a day for the past one month before putting up the show.

Six MiGs took part and among the formations they put up were the Criss Cross (two aircraft crossing each other), loop merge, oblique, box (four aircraft flying in diamond shape) and vertical bomburst (four aircraft split into different directions from the vertical direction).

Kol Jusof Embong, the team leader of the American-made Hornet, said his six team members had some basic aerobatic skills although they were fighter pilots.

"We planned on the ground and execute on the air after getting the 10-day notice," said Kol Jusof who has been flying for almost 30 years and has clocked about 6,000 hours of flying.

"We are not the Thunderbirds or the Red Arrows. We performed simple sequences," he said.

Although both teams are not the Thunderbirds or the Red Arrows, the show they put up really thrilled the crowd, including Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad.

"I am really impressed by their performances," Dr Mahathir yesterday.

-- BERNAMA

JM JK